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To:  
CC:  
Date: 8/8/2014 3:24:40 PM  
Subject: OPA Daily Digest 8/8/14

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#### **OPA Daily Digest for 8/8/14**

##### **Congressional Inquiries:**

**Sen. Charles Grassley** (Iowa) – Letter – 7/24/14: Abandoned school site contaminated with asbestos in Letts, Iowa. Due: 7/24/14. Contact: LaTonya Sanders, 7555 (open)

##### **State Government Inquiries:**

**Sen. Gary Romine, Sen. Doug Libla, Sen. Gina Walsh, Rep. Paul Wieland, Rep. Paul Fitzwater, Rep. TJ McKenna** – Letter – 7/25/14: Express concerns about characterization of many areas of Missouri as “contaminated.” Due: 8/7/14. Contact: Ben Washburn, 7364 (closed)

##### **Press Inquiries:**

**Greenwire** – Tiffany Stecker – 8/1/14: Requesting interview with RA for profile piece about EPA’s relationship with agriculture community. Contact: Ben Washburn, 7364 (open)

**KMOX Radio, St. Louis** – Kevin Killeen – 8/8/14: Provided copy of EPA Region 7’s letter responding to Congressional delegation concerns about timeline for isolation barrier project at West Lake Landfill Site in Bridgeton, Mo. Contact: Chris Whitley, 7394 (closed)

**KWMU Public Radio, St. Louis** – Veronique LaCapra – 8/8/14: Provided copy of EPA Region 7’s letter responding to Congressional delegation concerns about timeline for isolation barrier project at West Lake Landfill Site in Bridgeton, Mo. Contact: Chris Whitley, 7394 (closed)

**St. Louis Post-Dispatch** – Blythe Bernhard - 8/8/14: Provided copy of EPA Region 7’s letter responding to Congressional delegation concerns about timeline for isolation barrier project at West Lake Landfill Site in Bridgeton, Mo. Contact: Chris Whitley, 7394 (closed)

**Inside EPA** – Lee Logan – 8/8/14: Inquired about RA’s speech at the Greenhouse Gas Strategy Forum on Clean Power Plan. Contact: David

##### **Environmental Stories:**

**KPTM Ch. 42 Omaha - Farmers Battle The Feds Over Water Rules** - 8/7/14 - The Environmental Protection Agency has a new idea that would place some rules on streams

and wetlands, but now farmers are saying the idea could cost them a fortune to take care of their crops. <http://www.fox42kptm.com/story/26228384/farmers-battle-the-feds-over-water-rules>

**Omaha World-Herald - In Ashland, Nebraska lawmakers stand against proposed EPA regulations** - 8/7/14 - Nebraska's congressional delegation on Thursday called proposed new water regulations a dramatic expansion of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency power over the lives of ordinary Americans. They rejected federal officials' description of the proposal as a clarification of existing regulations protecting streams and wetlands. [http://www.omaha.com/news/metro/in-ashland-nebraska-lawmakers-stand-against-proposed-epa-regulations/article\\_3d87b182-ed09-52b1-b9b2-0142d57b472e.html](http://www.omaha.com/news/metro/in-ashland-nebraska-lawmakers-stand-against-proposed-epa-regulations/article_3d87b182-ed09-52b1-b9b2-0142d57b472e.html)

**WOWT Ch. 6 Omaha - Clean Water Act Under Scrutiny By Nebraska Delegation** – 8/7/14 - Nebraska's congressional contingent came together today at the "Strategic Air and Space Museum" to talk about changes in the "Clean Water Act." Elected officials from Nebraska call it "over-reach." <http://www.wowt.com/news/headlines/Clean-Water-Act-Under-Scrutiny-By-Nebraska-Delegation-270402791.html>

**Nebraska Radio Network - Group opposed to EPA expansion of Clean Water Act grows (audio)** - 8/7/14 - Some groups more associated with the city than the farm have joined the Nebraska Farm Bureau coalition opposed to an expansion of the Clean Water Act. <http://nebraskaradionetwork.com/2014/08/07/group-opposed-to-epa-expansion-of-clean-water-act-grows-audio/>

**Nebraska TV - Business Groups Join Forces with Farmers Pushing Back at EPA** - 8/7/14 - Business groups have joined forces with farmers, in a coalition pushing back at what they see as the overreach of the EPA. Home builders, bankers, and golf courses have joined with Nebraska Farm Bureau, Cattlemen, and other ag groups in the "Common Sense Nebraska" coalition. They're concerned about the Waters of the U.S. rule. <http://www.nebraska.tv/story/26223647/business-groups-join-forces-with-farmers-pushing-back-at-epa>

**KLKN Ch. 8 Lincoln, Neb. - EPA's Clean Water Act proposal sparks concern among Nebraska lawmakers** - 8/7/14 - The Environmental Protection Agency's new proposal to expand the power of the federal government under the Clean Water Act is sparking concern from Nebraska lawmakers. <http://www.klknv.com/story/26227256/epas-clean-water-act-proposal-sparks-concern-among-nebraska-lawmakers>

**Des Moines Register - Editorial: U.S. needs to get serious about water pollution** - 8/7/14 - Stories have attracted the nation's attention about people in an Ohio city the size of metro Des Moines losing their drinking water, or the fishing industry in Louisiana struggling to survive. Now states like Ohio and Iowa should show the nation they are serious about achieving clean water. <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/opinion/editorials/2014/08/07/get-serious-water-pollution/13754873/>

NOTE: Paywall issues might block you from reading this story online. Story included at the end of this email

**Iowa Public Radio - Toxic Pesticide That Affects Honeybees Found in Iowa Waterways** - 8/7/14 - A U. S. Geological Survey study has found widespread concentrations of a toxic pesticide in waterways in Iowa and throughout the upper Midwest. <http://iowapublicradio.org/post/toxic-pesticide-affects-honeybees-found-iowa-waterways>

**Science Direct - Widespread occurrence of neonicotinoid insecticides in streams in a high corn and soybean producing region, USA** - 8/6/14 - Neonicotinoid insecticides are of environmental concern, but little is known about their occurrence in surface water. An area of intense corn and soybean production in the Midwestern United States was chosen to study this issue because of the high agricultural use of neonicotinoids via both seed treatments and other forms of application. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0269749114002802>

**St. Louis Post-Dispatch - FutureFuel cites EPA renewable fuel delay for falling profits** - 8/7/14 - Delayed federal guidelines on the amount of renewable fuel the nation must use again crimped Clayton-based FutureFuel Corp.'s earnings, the company said Thursday. <http://www.stltoday.com/business/local/futurefuel-cites-epa->

[renewable-fuel-delay-for-falling-profits/article\\_10bbe9c8f3-59ae-aaba-978acb2805f0.html](http://www.renewable-fuel-delay-for-falling-profits/article_10bbe9c8f3-59ae-aaba-978acb2805f0.html)

**Ottumwa Courier (Iowa) - Sewer approval will let work flow** - 8/7/14 - The system that automatically controls Ottumwa's waste water treatment is beyond its useful life. It proved that point when it stopped working recently. <http://www.ottumwacourier.com/local/x1927913603/Sewer-approval-will-let-work-flow>

**St. Louis Post-Dispatch - Mehlville School Board votes against anti-coal resolution** - 8/7/14 - The Mehlville School Board declined Thursday night to pass a resolution calling for Ameren to move away from coal power -- a resolution pushed by some residents and the Sierra Club.. [http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/metro/mehlville-school-board-votes-against-anti-coal-resolution/article\\_51a3a449-93b9-5713-984f-daa04dc11b41.html](http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/metro/mehlville-school-board-votes-against-anti-coal-resolution/article_51a3a449-93b9-5713-984f-daa04dc11b41.html)

**Lawrence Journal-World - Prairie Park Nature Center chosen for solar panel project** - 8/6/14 - Lawrence's Prairie Park Nature Center soon will be paying more attention to nature's ultimate star: The sun. The nature center, 2730 Harper, has won a grant from Topeka-based Westar Energy to install solar panels on the roof. <http://www2.ljworld.com/news/2014/aug/06/prairie-park-nature-center-chosen-solar-panel-proj/>

**E&E News - Agency's 'aggressive' spox drives messaging counterattacks** - 8/7/14 - But in the past few months, the agency has started hitting back harder than ever. The architect behind the aggressive new media strategy is Tom Reynolds, an Obama campaign vet who thinks the agency's foes shouldn't get the last word. <http://www.eenews.net/stories/1060004205>

**Springfield News-Leader (Mo.) - Sierra Club opposes plan to charge more for solar** - 8/8/14 - Two members of the local chapter of the Sierra Club spoke out Thursday against a City Utilities proposal to essentially charge more for customers who want to get their energy from a new solar farm. <http://www.news-leader.com/story/news/local/ozarks/2014/08/07/sierra-club-opposes-plan-charge-solar/13757581/>

**WNAX Radio ,Yankton S.D. - Common Sense Group Grows Its Membership** - 8/7/14 - Common Sense Nebraska, a group started by seven agricultural groups has added 20 more members, all opposed to EPA's proposed Waters of the U.S. - See more at: <http://wnax.com/news/180081-common-sense-group-grows-its-embership/>

**National Review Online - Obama's Idea of Transparency** - 8/7/14 - Earlier this week, 47 inspectors general wrote to Congress complaining that Obama-administration agencies had established "serious limitations on access to records," interpreting federal law in a way that "represent[s] potentially serious challenges to the authority of every Inspector General and our ability to conduct our work thoroughly, independently, and in a timely matter." <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/384891/obamas-idea-transparency-jillian-kay-melchior>

**Wichita Eagle - Federal report helps detail size, speed of salty plume headed for Wichita's water wells** - 8/7/14 - The headline of a news release issued Thursday by a federal agency seemingly warned of doom and gloom for Wichita: "Chloride Contamination of Wichita's Water Supply Inevitable Unless Actions Taken." <http://www.kansas.com/2014/08/07/3586861/federal-report-helps-detail-size.html#storylink=cpyhttp://www.kansas.com/2014/08/07/3586861/federal-report-helps-detail-size.html>

**MIT Technology Review - Stacking Cells Could Make Solar as Cheap as Natural Gas** - 8/6/14 - A novel manufacturing method could make it practical to stack solar cells and convert more of the energy in sunlight into electricity. <http://www.technologyreview.com/news/529651/stacking-cells-could-make-solar-as-cheap-as-natural-gas/>

**E&E News PM - Kan. senator hires former lobbyist as agriculture aide** - 8/7/14 - Former lobbyist Judd Gardner has joined Kansas Republican Sen. Jerry Moran's office as a legislative assistant for agriculture, environment and trade issues. <http://www.eenews.net/eenewspm/stories/1060004219/>

**Reuters - Deep emissions cuts needed by 2050 to limit warming: U.N. draft** - 8/7/14 - Deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions of 40 to 70 percent by mid-century will be needed to avert the worst of global warming that is already harming all continents, a draft U.N. report showed. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/07/us-climatechange-solutions-idUSKBN0G71SF20140807>

**Brownfield Ag News - UAVs: The future of crop scouting** - 8/8/14 - Technology that farmers use to scout their fields has come a long way. Aaron Scheller, owner of Indiana based Precision Drone says prior to today's technology, the last major technological advancement farmers had for crop scouting – was the work boot. <http://brownfieldagnews.com/2014/08/08/uavs-the-future-of-crop-scouting/>

**The Week - Could conservatives pull a Halbig on the EPA?** - 8/8/14 - Josiah Neeley recently made the case here at The Week, arguing that because of a drafting error in amendments to the Clean Air Act, the EPA's proposed rules on coal-fired power plants could be overturned. <http://theweek.com/article/index/266039/could-conservatives-pull-a-halbig-on-the-epa>

**The Hill - EPA taps new No. 2 in staff shuffle** - 8/07/14 - The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) named Lisa Feldt as acting deputy administrator on Tuesday, replacing the outgoing second in command. <http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/214630-epa-taps-new-no-2-in-staff-shuffle>

**DeSmogBlog - Green Billionaires Club? David Vitter Owns Stock in Coal Utilities Fighting EPA Carbon Rules** - 8/8/14 - Critics of a recent report say it is propaganda designed to skewer the Obama EPA and environmental philanthropists for “conspiring to help the environment.” Vitter's chief source of campaign cash is the oil and gas industry and he recently called the billionaire Koch Brothers “two of the most patriotic Americans in the history of the Earth.” <http://www.desmogblog.com/2014/08/08/green-billionaires-club-david-vitter-owns-stock-coal-utilities-epa-obama-carbon-rules>

**Renewable Energy Magazine - First international commercial flight completed with renewable jet fuel blend** - 8/7/14 - Amyris has partnered with Brazilian airline GOL to stage the first commercial flight using a 10 percent renewable jet fuel blend. <http://www.renewableenergymagazine.com/article/first-international-commercial-flight-completed-with-renewable-20140807>

**Here And Now - How Can Businesses Climate-Proof Themselves?** (audio) - 8/7/14 - According to the Insurance Information Institute, three of the top six years for catastrophic insurance losses — topping \$142 billion — have taken place since 2005, and scientists agree that climate change has played a major role. <http://hereandnow.wbur.org/2014/08/07/business-climate-proof>

**USA Today - Economic arguments to act on climate change: Your Say** - 8/7/14 - Using Chinese inaction as an excuse for ignoring global warming is a mistake, a USA TODAY editorial argued, because China has begun addressing its environmental problems. <http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2014/08/07/climate-change-economy-jobs-business-your-say/13750543/>

**Greenwire - McCarthy declines invite to journo conference** - 8/8/14 - U.S. EPA chief Gina McCarthy won't be on the agenda at this year's annual conference of environmental journalists. McCarthy declined an invitation from the Society of Environmental Journalists to speak at its yearly gathering, slated to take place in New Orleans from Sept. 3 to 7, according to SEJ Executive Director Beth Parke. <http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060004261/>

**Greenwire - EPA rule not such a boon for nuclear after all -- utilities** - 8/8/14 - U.S. EPA's greenhouse gas proposal for existing power plants doesn't do enough to boost nuclear energy, advocates for the industry say. <http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060004265/>

**Greenwire - Is Texas considering bucking power plant rule?** - 8/8/14 - Texas is mulling another challenge to U.S. EPA carbon limits, possibly by refusing to implement the

agency's proposal for existing power plants. <http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060004275/>

**Greenwire - EPA plan for cleaner stoves draws heat from industry groups** - 8/8/14 - Representatives from the fireplace and barbecue industries this week met with senior U.S. EPA officials to air concerns about the agency's plans for reducing pollution from wood-burning stoves and heaters. <http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060004267/>

**Greenwire - Microbe 'ecosystems' have implications for oil cleanups -- and alien life** - 8/8/14 - Minuscule "ecosystems" of microbes in water droplets discovered in an asphalt lake have an appetite for grease -- a discovery that could have important implications for oil spill cleanups and even the search for extraterrestrial life. <http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060004266/>

**Greenwire - EPA seeks comment on evaluating painting, repair hazards** - 8/7/14 - U.S. EPA is seeking input on a new document describing the methods the agency may use to evaluate hazards posed by lead exposure during renovation, repair and painting activities. <http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060004201/>

**Greenwire - More buyouts slated for October** - 8/7/14 - U.S. EPA is planning another round of buyouts and early outs this fall as it looks to keep trimming its staff. Agency management has alerted union officials that it's planning another round of buyouts tentatively scheduled for October. <http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060004206/>

**Greenwire - USDA policy for 'early outs' won't apply to highly erodible land** - 8/7/14 - Farmland most vulnerable to soil erosion will not be eligible to leave an Agriculture Department program that seeks to avoid erosion and protect wildlife habitat under a policy released yesterday. <http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060004210/>

**Greenwire - Union officials 'not fully satisfied' as McCarthy defends faster firings** - 8/7/14 - U.S. EPA chief Gina McCarthy is defending her recent comments that firing problem employees should be speedier, but EPA union officials aren't yet satisfied. <http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060004214/>

**BNA - McCarthy Clarifies Comments About Employee Termination Reform to Union** - 8/7/14 - Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy said her comments before a congressional hearing welcoming civil service regulation reforms to make it easier to fire employees applied to the "most serious and potentially dangerous situations" of misconduct. [http://news.bna.com/deln/DELNWB/split\\_display.adp?fedfid=51298477&vname=dennotallissues&jd=a0f4j3x2b1&split=0](http://news.bna.com/deln/DELNWB/split_display.adp?fedfid=51298477&vname=dennotallissues&jd=a0f4j3x2b1&split=0)

**BNA - EPA Publishes Renewable Fuel Standard Extension** - 8/7/14 - The Environmental Protection Agency will publish a direct final rule in the Federal Register Aug. 8 extending the compliance deadline for the 2013 renewable fuel standard. [http://news.bna.com/deln/DELNWB/split\\_display.adp?fedfid=51298476&vname=dennotallissues&jd=a0f4j2z5k3&split=0](http://news.bna.com/deln/DELNWB/split_display.adp?fedfid=51298476&vname=dennotallissues&jd=a0f4j2z5k3&split=0)

**Inside EPA - NAS Formaldehyde Report Could Bolster Stringent EPA Risk Analysis** - 8/8/14 - The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in a new report is backing conclusions by the National Toxicology Program (NTP) that formaldehyde is a human carcinogen. <http://insideepa.com/201408082478924/EPA-Daily-News/Daily-News/nas-formaldehyde-report-could-bolster-stringent-epa-risk-analysis/menu-id-95.html>

**Inside EPA - Administration Wins More Time To Mull 'High Level' Impacts Of SCC Case** - 8/8/14 - A federal district court has granted the administration's request to extend a deadline for responding to the court on the "high level" policy implications of its first-time ruling criticizing the government's failure to use a social cost of carbon (SCC) value in assessing greenhouse gas (GHG) impacts from coal mining leases. <http://insideepa.com/201408082478916/EPA-Daily-News/Daily-News/administration-wins-more-time-to-mull-high-level-impacts-of-scc-case/menu-id-95.html>

**Inside EPA - High Court GHG Ruling Clears Path For Resolving Other Climate Rule Suits** - 8/7/14 - The Supreme Court's ruling narrowing the scope of EPA's greenhouse gas (GHG) permitting program clears the path for resolving a host of long-stayed suits over other agency climate rules. <http://insideepa.com/201408072478889/EPA-Daily-News/Daily-News/high-court-ghg-ruling-clears-path-for-resolving-other-climate-rule-suits/menu-id-95.html>

**Inside EPA - After Departures, McCarthy Taps 'Acting' Officials To Fill Crucial Vacancies** - 8/7/14 - EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy is appointing current agency officials to temporarily fill vacancies for the agency's deputy administrator and other vacant top slots. <http://insideepa.com/201408072478888/EPA-Daily-News/Daily-News/after-departures-mccarthy-taps-acting-officials-to-fill-crucial-vacancies/menu-id-95.html>

**Inside EPA - Utilities Fight FERC Bid For Court To Reconsider Demand Response Ruling** - 8/7/14 - Merchant power utilities are criticizing the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) request for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit to reconsider its split ruling scrapping a FERC rule on demand response (DR) compensation. <http://cleanenergyreport.com/201408072478856/Clean-Energy-Report-Daily-News/News/utilities-fight-ferc-bid-for-court-to-reconsider-demand-response-ruling/menu-id-202.html>

**Inside EPA - Environmentalists Resist EPA Plan To Delay End Of RCRA 'Fuels' Waiver** - 8/7/14 - Environmentalists are signaling they will fight EPA's anticipated request to a federal appellate court for a lengthy 'transition period' before it ends its recently vacated regulation exempting some hazardous waste used as fuel from strict federal waste management regulations. <http://insideepa.com/201408072478863/EPA-Daily-News/Daily-News/environmentalists-resist-epa-plan-to-delay-end-of-rcra-fuels-waiver/menu-id-95.html>

#### **Press Releases:**

Link to all R7 press releases: <http://go.usa.gov/Qx5>

None

#### **Fact Sheets:**

Link to all R7 fact sheets: <http://www.epa.gov/region7/factsheets>

None

#### **Upcoming Administrator/RA Events:**

\* New additions noted with an asterisk

**8/11/14** – Black & Veatch Greenhouse Gas Strategies Forum (Clean Power Plan), Kansas City, Mo. Contact: David Bryan, 7433

**8/13/14** – Iowa Association of Business & Industry (Clean Power Plan), Des Moines, Iowa. Contact: David Bryan, 7433

**8/14/14** - Agricultural Outreach, Sedalia, Mo. Contact: Kris Lancaster, 7557

**9/3/14** – Office of Water Visit to Region 7, Regional Office. Contact: Karen Flournoy, 7782

**9/10/14** - Kansas City Steel Redevelopment/Walmart Grand Opening, Kansas City, Kan. Contact: Ben Washburn, 7364

**9/10/14** – U.S. Health & Human Services Senior Leadership Meeting (Clean Power Plan), Kansas City, Mo. Contact: Kris Lancaster, 7557

**9/14-17/14** – Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) Fall Meeting, Santa Fe, N.M. Contact: Julia Cacho,

**DRA:**

**8/20/14** – Tribal Consultation Training, Regional Office. Contact: Heather Hamilton, 7039

**RA/Immediate Office**

None

**Other Events**

**AWMD**

None

**CNSL**

None

**ECO/EJ**

None

**ENSV**

None

**PLMG**

None

**RA/OPA**

**8/11/14** – Attend West Lake Landfill CAG meeting. Contact: Ben Washburn, 7364

**9/29-30/14** - Healthy Schools Outreach, Missouri School Plant Managers' Association Conference, Four Seasons, Lake of the Ozarks, Mo. Contact: Kathleen Fenton, 7874 and Harry Diesel, 7382



## **SUPR**

None

## **WWPD**

**8/12-13/14** – Missouri Department of Natural Resources Underground Injection Control Program Meeting, Rolla, Mo. Contact: Kurt Hildebrandt, 7413

**8/18-21/14** – Purdue Pesticide Program Certification and Training Workshop, Indianapolis, Ind. Contact: Douglas Jones, 7592

**8/19/14** – Missouri Safe Drinking Water Commission Meeting, Joplin, Mo. Contact: Neftali Hernandez-Santiago, 7036

**8/20/14** – Water Quality Standards Triennial Review with Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Des Moines, Iowa. Contact: John Reyna, 7021

**8/26-28/14** – Kansas Water Environment Association/Kansas Section, American Water Works Association Joint Conference, Topeka, Kan. Contact: Wayne Dillard, 7885

**9/8-11/14** – National EPA Small Systems Drinking Water Technical Conference, Cincinnati, Ohio. Contact: Stan Calow, 7410

**9/9/14** – Iowa Department of Natural Resources Drinking Water Program Meeting, Des Moines, Iowa. Contact: Neftali Hernandez-Santiago, 7036

## **Des Moines Register**

### **Editorial: U.S. needs to get serious about water pollution**

August 7, 2014

When officials said it was unsafe to drink or even bathe in Toledo, Ohio's municipal water supplies last weekend, it was a major inconvenience for nearly a half-million residents.

It was also a wake-up call for the rest of the nation to the fact that water pollution can directly affect the health of humans as well as rivers, lakes and aquatic life.

The question is whether this news will lead to meaningful action to improve water quality in this country. The water problem that made the news in Toledo is also an issue for bodies of water ranging from Minnesota, California, Cape Cod and Chesapeake Bay to the Gulf of Mexico — and Iowa.

Des Moines officials said this week that if the right circumstances were to occur locally, Iowa's largest metro area could have to deal with the same situation.

It is time for the nation and these affected regions to commit to meaningful action.

Toledo draws its drinking water from Lake Erie, which is routinely affected by algae plumes created by excess nutrients flowing into the water from agricultural areas, urban sewage and industrial waste. It appears the plume on Lake Erie that settled directly over Toledo's water intake pipes spawned toxic microcystin, which may cause diarrhea, vomiting and liver problems.



The drinking water ban was lifted Monday, but the toxic algae plume won't go away permanently anytime soon. Unless water quality improves on Lake Erie, according to experts quoted by the New York Times, the problem Toledo encountered could potentially affect 11 million residents living along the lake.

The reasons cited for the growth of algae plumes include intensive farming, animal confinements, urbanization and industrialization in the region. Whereas the federal regulators can legally require compliance by cities and factories, Ohio's plan for dealing with the problem relies on voluntary compliance by agriculture.

If this sounds familiar, that is because Iowa and other Midwest states have used the same voluntary approach to reducing excess nutrients in the Mississippi River basin. Those nutrients, which come mostly from agriculture, feed massive algae plumes in the Gulf of Mexico. It's known as the dead zone because the plumes starve oxygen needed by aquatic life.

It is hard to say whether Iowa's nutrient reduction strategy is having significant impact, but recent evidence is not encouraging. On Monday, the size of the Gulf of Mexico dead zone was measured at more than 5,000 square miles, or the size of Connecticut. Though the dead zone is somewhat smaller than in 2013, the five-year average is still nearly three times the size set as a goal 13 years ago as part of a national effort to reduce the size of the zone.

Leaders of farm organizations and state agriculture and environmental officials in Iowa point to anecdotal evidence that farmers are improving their land-use practices to stop excess nutrients from washing downstream. Those examples are encouraging, but Iowa agricultural and political leaders oppose setting quantifiable goals for water quality and measuring results within specific watersheds.

That opposition must end. Otherwise those examples are just anecdotes, and there will be no way to know for sure what farming practices are effective. When practices that work can be quantified — if not measured at each farm, at least within regional watersheds — the public should be willing to help farmers pay for the necessary investment.

Stories have attracted the nation's attention about people in an Ohio city the size of metro Des Moines losing their drinking water, or the fishing industry in Louisiana struggling to survive. Now states like Ohio and Iowa should show the nation they are serious about achieving clean water.